



DOE Proposes Modification To Hazardous Waste Facility Permit

Redesign of Panel Closure System at WIPP

Background

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has proposed a modification to its Hazardous Waste Facility Permit for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in order to provide greater support to the DOE environmental cleanup effort.

The existing permit establishes requirements for closing a waste disposal panel at the WIPP facility once it is declared full. A waste disposal panel consists of seven rooms each, with a 100 foot beam of salt separating each room. A panel will accommodate approximately 86,500 55-gallon drums of disposed transuranic waste.

What is Proposed?

DOE submitted a class 3 permit modification request to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) on October 7, 2002. The change seeks to clarify the way a disposal panel will be permanently closed. NMED issued the original WIPP Hazardous Waste Facility Permit in October 1999.

The current panel closure system requires that a panel be permanently secured by emplacing a 12-foot long reinforced isolation wall followed by a 26-foot thick solid wall composed of Salado Mass concrete. It has been determined that this closure system would be difficult to construct due to the substantial quantity of Salado Mass concrete required to build the solid barrier.

The revised panel closure system proposes a 30-foot long isolation wall composed of mortared concrete block reinforced by a 100-foot thick barrier of run of the mine salt as backfill. Run of the mine salt, used as backfill, is obtained from routine mining activities in the WIPP underground.

What are the Benefits?

The proposed Panel Closure System will maintain the same level of safety, require less complex construction, be more cost effective, and reduce risk to workers.

Comments

Comments for the record must be sent to Mr. Steve Zappe, New Mexico Environment Department, 2905 Rodeo Park Drive, Building 1, Santa Fe, NM 87505. They may also be e-mailed: steve_zappe@nmenv.state.nm.us or faxed to 505-428-2567. Only written comments will be accepted and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. MDT on December 16, 2002. A copy of the permit modification may be viewed or copied at the NMED offices of Mr. Zappe. To be placed on the WIPP mailing list, contact Mr. Zappe at the address above.

For more Information

For more information about transuranic waste shipments and procedures, call the WIPP Information Center at 1-800-336-WIPP (9477). You also may visit the WIPP Home Page at <http://www.wipp.ws>. Comments to the Permittees regarding this permit modification may be sent to Mr. Bobby St. John, Westinghouse TRU Solutions, P.O. Box 2078, Carlsbad, NM 88221.